

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY JULIUS L. KATZ

FOLLOWING REPEAT HONG KONG 13333 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
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QUOTE

UNCLAS HONG KONG 13333

FOR AGRICULTURE, FAS, FCA, GRAIN AND FEED DIVISION
FROM: AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CH

SUBJECT: SHORTFALL IN PRC WINTER WHEAT SOWING

BEGIN SUMMARY: CHINA MAY PRODUCE LESS WHEAT IN 1976 THAN IT DID THIS
YEAR, IF EARLY REPORTS OF WINTER WHEAT SOWING PROVE TO BE ACCURATE
INDICATORS OF NEXT SUMMER'S HARVEST POTENTIAL. ALTHOUGH NEARLY THE
ENTIRE GROWING SEASON LIES AHEAD, AND OPTIMUM WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY
CHARACTERIZE THE 1975-76 WINTER WHEAT GROWING SEASON, PRC'S PEASANTS
APPARENTLY HAVE FAILED NOT ONLY TO MEET GOALS FOR EXPANDED AREA SOWN
TO WINTER WHEAT, BUT ALSO VERY LIKELY FAILED TO REACH LAST YEAR'S LEV
EL.

END SUMMARY.

1. EARLY RESULTS AND ESTIMATES OF SOWING ACHIEVEMENTS IN PROVINCE-
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LEVEL UNITS ACCOUNTING FOR SLIGHTLY LESS THAN HALF OF CHINA'S WINTER

WHEAT AREA REVEAL A GOOD PERFORMANCE IN HOPEH, A MAJOR WHEAT-PRODUCING PROVINCE, WHERE SOWN AREA WAS INCREASED BY 16-17 PERCENT OVER 1974-75 TO REACH 2.4 MILLION HECTARES. PEKING AND TIENTSIN, LARGE MUNICIPALITIES IN SAME AREA, BOTH INCREASED SOWN AREA OVER 1974-75, BUT TIENTSIN FELL SHORT OF TARGET FOR EXPANDED PLANTINGS. SOWING WAS CARRIED OUT UNDER ABNORMALLY DRY CONDITIONS, WITH RAINFALL THROUGHOUT SEPTEMBER AND MOST OF EARLY OCTOBER FAR BELOW AVERAGE AND SOIL MOISTURE LEVELS 60-70 PERCENT BELOW NORMAL.

2. OFFSETTING THAT ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS POOR PERFORMANCE IN SECOND-LARGEST WHEAT PROVINCE, SHANTUNG, AND AN OTHER IMPORTANT PRODUCER, SHENSI. SHANTUNG AND SHENSI BOTH FAILED TO REACH EITHER 1974-75 LEVELS OR PLANNED LEVELS FOR WINTER WHEAT SOWING FOR 1975-76 PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF HEAVY RAINS DURING OPTIMUM SOWING PERIOD IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER. ALTHOUGH NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SOWING RESULTS IN NEIGHBORING HONAN (CHINA'S LEADING WHEAT-GROWING PROVINCE) AND SHANSI, ANOTHER IMPORTANT WHEAT PROVINCE, IT IS KNOWN THAT THEY ALSO SUFFERED FROM EXCESSIVELY HEAVY RAINS IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY AFFECTED SOWING PROGRESS AND RESULTS.

3. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT SHANTUNG AND SHENSI TOGETHER FELL 600-700,000 HA SHORT OF LAST YEAR'S PERFORMANCE AND EVEN FURTHER BELOW THIS YEAR'S INCREASED TARGETS. WITH STILL FURTHER SOWING SHORTFALLS ASSUMED FOR HONAN AND SHANSI, THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT GAINS MADE IN HOPEH AND POSSIBLE SMALL GAINS IN OTHER WINTER WHEAT AREAS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE (AS SOUTHERN CHINA, WHERE SOWING STILL UNDERWAY) WILL OFFSET PLANTING SHORTFALLS IN MAJOR AREAS OF NORTHERN CHINA. (IN THE ABSENCE OF REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT IS CONJECTURE COVERING A LARGE AREA.) THERE IS ALSO LITTLE HOPE OF INCREASING SPRING WHEAT AREA (ONLY 10-15 PERCENT OF TOTAL WHEAT AREA) SUFFICIENTLY TO PROVIDE MUCH OFFSET FOR REDUCED PLANTINGS OF WINTER WHEAT.

4. IF 1975-76 GROWING SEASON WEATHER IS HIGHLY FAVORABLE, HIGH YIELDS MAY IN PART OFFSET THE REDUCTION IN PLANTED AREA. HOWEVER, THE OUTLOOK FOR CHINA'S 1976 WHEAT CROP AT THIS TIME, BASED ON HIGHLY FRAGMENTARY REPORTS AND MANY ASSUMPTIONS, IS UNCLASSIFIED

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NOT FAVORABLE.
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